# **MDT Supports Safety Legislation**

During the upcoming legislative session, Montana agencies and the Attorney General are supporting several bills to address these safety concerns:

#### **Open Container Law**

To conform to federal requirements, an open container law must contain each of the following elements:

- Prohibit possession of any open alcoholic beverage container and the consumption of any alcoholic beverage in the passenger area of a motor vehicle.
- Define "passenger area" as the area of the vehicle designed to seat the
  driver and passengers while the vehicle is in operation. It must include
  any area readily accessible to the seated driver or passenger including
  an unlocked glove compartment.
- Apply to all open containers containing beverages that are .5% or more
  of alcohol by volume. An open container is any receptacle that is open,
  has a broken seal, or contents that are partially removed.
- Apply to all occupants of the motor vehicle.
- Specify that the law applies to a motor vehicle located anywhere within the right-of-way of a public highway.
- Provide for primary enforcement.

Failure to enact an open container law will force the transfer of Federal-aid highway construction funds to programs for drinking and driving countermeasures, law enforcement, or hazard elimination. The funds cannot be used for core highway program improvements. Montana can expect to lose a minimum of \$5.8 million in highway construction funds every year until it passes an open container law.

### **Primary Seat Belt Law**

- Primary seat belt laws allow law enforcement officers to stop a vehicle and cite the occupants for not wearing seat belts.
- Montana currently has a secondary seat belt law. Officers cannot stop a
  vehicle simply for a seat belt violation. They must have another reason.
  Only then can they also cite the driver or passengers if they are not
  buckled up.

#### **Graduated Drivers Licensing Law**

- Allows drivers under age 18 to gradually develop and improve their driving skills.
- Requires a six-month learning period during which the new driver can only drive with a licensed driver over age 21 in the front seat.
- Places restrictions on drivers under age 18 for one year. This includes requiring the young drivers to wear seat belts and limiting nighttime driving.
- Places restrictions and limits on the number of passengers under age 20 allowed in the vehicle.

#### **Why Montana Needs These Laws:**

#### **Open Container Law**

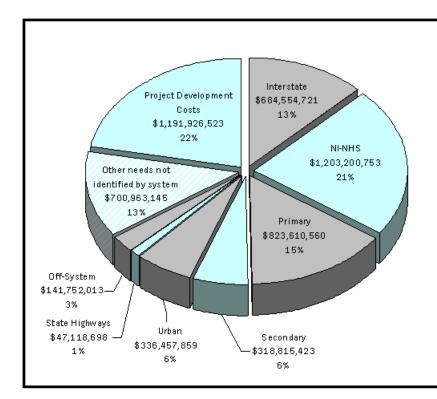
- In 2002, Montana had the highest rate of alcohol-related fatalities in the nation.
- Montana had 128 alcohol-related deaths in 2003 – 49% of total highway fatalities.
- 1,091 people were killed in alcohol/drugrelated traffic crashes in Montana from 1994 through 2003.
- Alcohol/drug-related crashes cost Montanans over \$400 million between 2001 and 2003. (National Safety Council)
- A comparison of crash data showed that states without open container laws had about 10% more alcohol-involved fatal crashes than states with partially or fully conforming laws. (National Highway Transportation Safety Administration)

#### **Primary Seat Belt Law**

- States with primary seat belt laws have a 10% to 15% higher seat belt use rate than states with secondary seat belt laws. (National Transportation Safety Board)
- Although Montana has a seat belt usage rate of 81%, more than 70% of those killed in vehicle accidents in 2003 were not wearing seat belts.
- If seat belt usage in Montana surpassed 90%, an estimated 20 to 30 fewer fatalities would occur each year.

#### **Graduated Drivers Licensing Law**

- Montana teenage drivers are two to three times more likely to be in a crash than adult drivers.
- States with graduated drivers licensing laws experience 5% to 25% reductions in crashes involving teenage drivers.
- A 1993 study showed that 54% of fatal crashes involving 16 year-olds occurred when they were transporting other teens without an adult in the car. (National Research Council)



# Transportation Needs Assessment

Every two years, MDT prepares an estimate of the funding needed over a ten-year period to keep the highways, airports, and transit programs under its jurisdiction up to an acceptable standard. The graph at left illustrates those costs in general terms as shown in the most recent needs assessment. To view more detailed information, go to <a href="https://www.mdt.state.mt.us/tranplan/docs/needs\_system.pdf">https://www.mdt.state.mt.us/tranplan/docs/needs\_system.pdf</a>.

# **Committee to Oversee Traffic Safety Plan**

MDT recently formed a multi-agency Traffic Safety Committee charged with developing a comprehensive, strategic approach to highway traffic safety planning. Members of the committee include the director of MDT, the director of Public Health and Human Services, the court administrator, and the head of the Montana Highway Patrol. The committee also includes representatives from the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration, law enforcement, local courts, tribal leadership, and other organizations that have a vested interest in traffic safety. The committee will work with a team from Cambridge Systematics Inc. to develop a formal statewide Comprehensive Traffic Safety Plan (CTSP). Once the CTSP is complete, the Traffic Safety Committee will oversee its implementation by establishing and maintaining activities and programs to reduce crashes and save lives.

At a November 29 meeting, Cambridge Systematics presented a briefing paper that outlined the following components of a Comprehensive Traffic Safety Plan:

- Establish specific, quantifiable safety-related goals, objectives, and performance measures relevant to all modes of transportation including highways, transit, bicyclist/pedestrian, and commercial vehicles.
- Address issues at all levels of jurisdiction with specific attention to local and tribal entities.
- Establish a mechanism for interagency coordination for safety issues and develop the necessary partnership agreements.
- Provide a strategic implementation plan with short-, mid-, and long-term action items, including action items that can

be incorporated into the performance plans, policies, and programs of participating state and local agencies.

This paper also includes an overview of the highway traffic safety crisis in Montana, the need for a comprehensive plan, next steps, and long-term commitments.

For more information contact Audrey Allums at 444-7411 or *aallums@mt.gov*.

Montana has taken a tremendous step toward improving the safety of its roadways by developing a Statewide Comprehensive Safety Plan. Because the plan will cover all aspects of transportation safety, numerous state, local, and federal agencies will need to work together for a common goal of reducing crashes on Montana's highways. We are extremely encouraged by the cooperation already shown by these agencies as we begin the development of the Comprehensive Safety Plan. Through this collaboration, Montana will be able to take advantage of all the resources and capabilities which these agencies can provide to reduce crashes and save lives.

- Sam Lawton, Cambridge Systematics Inc.

# **Officials Break Ground for the Peoples Way**



Lieutenant Governor Karl Ohs, Tribal Council Chairman Fred Matt, FHWA Administrator Janice Brown, and MDT Director Dave Galt wield ceremonial shovels at the groundbreaking ceremony for the U.S. 93 Transportation Improvement Project.

n October 14, federal, state, and tribal officials gathered at the Jocko River Bridge to inaugurate the U.S. 93 Transportation Improvement Project—an undertaking that promises to increase highway safety while making an unprecedented commitment to culture, landscape, and wildlife. The safety and road capacity improvements on U.S. 93 from Evaro to Polson are a collective vision of MDT, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Nation.

"The Peoples Way sets a new standard for road design, commitment to the environment and intergovernmental collaboration," announced MDT Director Dave Galt. "For nearly 20 years the future of U.S. 93 was the subject of spirited debate, as safety, capacity, culture, wildlife, and landscape seemed to be competing needs. It was not until the three governments involved came to the negotiating table as equal partners that we were able to agree upon an approach that met everyone's unique needs."

The first phase of construction will focus on the renovation and expansion of the Jocko River Bridge near Arlee. Work on this segment should be substantially complete by December 2005, with removal of the old bridge, chip-sealing, and striping to take place in 2006. Completion of the entire corridor is expected in 2009.

"We must remember that the road is just a visitor," proclaimed Fred Matt, Tribal Council Chairman of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. "The collaboration behind the redesign of the Peoples Way is a lesson from which other states may learn and one that ensures the highway will work in harmony with the land it is visiting."

Among the highway's many progressive features are more than 40 wildlife crossings designed to accommodate natural routes of animal migration. "Migratory fish, turtles, deer, grizzly bears and many other animals will benefit tremendously by these crossings," added Matt. "We want to set a new standard for mitigation of wildlife near our highways."

"We are all very proud to be part of this incredible project," said FHWA Administrator Janice Brown. "It's been a long time in the works and meets the safety concerns that are of paramount importance to FHWA. Driving the Peoples Way will not be the hazardous experience it once was."

According to data from MDT's Traffic and Safety Bureau, the segment of U.S. 93 from Evaro to Polson ranks among Montana's most dangerous sections of road. In four of the past nine years, for example, deaths on U.S. 93 from Evaro to Polson accounted for anywhere from 4.5% to 5.2% of all Montana highway fatalities—and this stretch comprises only 56.3 of the over 69,000 miles of public road in the state.

Named "The Peoples Way" because of the many groups and parties whose interests have come together, the project extends from Evaro to Polson traversing the Flathead Indian Reservation for all but about one mile. Because of special concerns near the Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge, the stretch of highway traversing the refuge is undergoing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement study.

The guiding philosophy for modifications is to protect cultural, aesthetic, recreational, and natural resources located along the highway corridor and to communicate the respect and value that is commonly held for these resources pursuant to traditional ways of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.



Salish Cultural Leader Louie Adams offers a blessing for the Peoples Way as Karl Ohs and Janice Brown look on.

### **Montana Completes Rail Competition Study**



A freight train picks up grain near Moccasin. This facility can load 110 rail cars in 15 hours or less.

In response to direction from the 2003 Montana Legislature, the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity recently completed a comprehensive study of the



Loading coal at Colstrip. About 74 percent of Montana's coal production is shipped to out-of-state utilities.

critically important issue of rail competition in Montana.

Montana businesses rely on rail transportation to move Montana commodities

to national and international markets. Each year, for example, Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, Montana's largest railroad, transports over 300,000 rail cars carrying Montana products such as coal, grain, and wood to out-of-state destinations. Unfortunately, the general lack of rail competition in Montana has detracted from the ability of Montana businesses to compete in the world economy.

The Rail Freight Competition Study includes a comprehensive review of the major issues surrounding rail competition in Montana. The study, which was completed by R.L. Banks and Associates, describes the history of freight railroad service in Montana, summarizes the impacts of the lack of railroad competition on Montana, and discusses potential options to address this challenging situation.

To request a copy of the Rail Freight Competition Study, call 444-7646. The report is also available for viewing at www.mdt.state.mt.us/tranplan.

## **Highway Reconfiguration Study Wraps Up**

MDT recently completed a groundbreaking study of the economic impact of highway expansion in Montana. With the guidance of a steering committee of business and government officials with expertise in economic development, the study achieved its original goals. In addition, the study produced a unique analysis tool that MDT will use to assess the economic impacts of proposed highway improvements.

The primary focus of the study was to examine the general issue of highway expansion and economic development in Montana. However, the study also gave MDT the opportunity to develop the Highway Economic Analysis Tool, or HEAT, which will enable MDT to comply with direction from the 2001 Legislature to include economic factors in its highway planning process. HEAT is the first economic analysis model in the U.S. that highway planners can use to examine highway economic impacts at the statewide, corridor, or project level.

To test HEAT, the Reconfiguration Study examined several HEAT test scenarios on representative Montana highway corridors such as U.S. Highway 93 between Evaro and Polson, Montana Highway 3 between Great Falls and Billings, and U.S. Highway 2 from the Idaho state line to the North Dakota state line. The results of these test runs are documented in the Highway Reconfiguration Study final report, which is available for viewing at www.mdt.state.mt.us/research/docs/reconfig/final\_report.pdf or by calling Sue Sillick at 444-7693.

The groundbreaking importance of HEAT is evident in the amount of interest that transportation officials in other states, including Idaho and Utah, have shown in adapting HEAT for use in their states. This interest should grow as MDT integrates HEAT into its Performance Programming Process (P³) and its analysis of proposed corridor improvement alternatives.

A consultant team led by Cambridge Systematics and Economic Development Research Group conducted the study. Both firms have national and international expertise in the links between transportation and economic development. In addition to using data from national sources, the consultant team interviewed Montana business and economic development leaders to ensure the study accurately reflected Montana economic conditions and perspectives.

Members of the Study Steering Committee included Janice Brown, Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration; Charity Watt Levis, AAA; Vern Petersen, Fergus County Commission; Dan Rice, Transportation Commission, and Vice President, TranSystems Inc.; Duane Kurokawa, President, Great Northern Development Corp., Wolf Point: Keith Tokerud, Chairman, Great Falls Chamber of Commerce; Mark Simonich, Director, Montana Department of Commerce; Bob Giordano, Missoula Institute for Sustainable Transportation; Joe Unterreiner, President, Kalispell Area Chamber of Commerce; Dave Gibson, Chief Business Officer, Governor's Office; Randy Gray, Mayor of Great Falls; Mark Cole, Dick Irvin Trucking, Shelby; Michael Sanderson, Vice President, Engineering Inc., Billings; and Kent Coe, Vice President, Billings Chamber of Commerce.

## **Jim Lynch Appointed MDT Director**



In-coming MDT Director Jim Lynch will officially begin his new duties on January 3.

Governor-elect Brian Schweitzer has chosen Jim Lynch to head the Montana Department of Transportation.

Schweitzer made the announcement December 15 at a news conference at Hungry Horse Dam.

"The roadways are the lifelines of Montana," said Schweitzer. "I am honored to be appointing Jim Lynch – a man who has built roads and managed roads to be the director of the Department of Transportation."

Lynch has worked in the construction business for 30 years. Currently, he is the public policy advisor for Oldcastle Materials NW Group, a Kalispell building materials company. He worked as president and CEO for Pack and Company in Kalispell for 15 years and was the general manager of highway maintenance for Johanson Construction in Spokane, Washington, for eight years.

Lynch is a pilot, with airplane singleengine land, multi-engine, instrument, and helicopter ratings. He graduated from Gonzaga Prep in Spokane and received his bachelor of science degree from Kean University in Union, New Jersey. He and his wife, Pam, have two sons and one daughter.

If confirmed by the Senate, Lynch will replace Dave Galt who is resigning to open a consulting business.

# **U.S. and Canada Dedicate Shared Port Facility**



This a view of the new Sweet Grass/Coutts border crossing complex from the U.S. side looking north. Inspired by Montana's grain elevators, architect Kate Diamond used galvanized steel siding as a building material.

DT Director Dave Galt and Great Falls District Administrator Mick Johnson joined Canadian officials on September 15 to dedicate the new Sweet Grass/Coutts Port Facility. The project was a joint effort of the United States and Canada—the first of three upgraded border stations authorized under the "Shared Border Accord" signed in 1996 by former Canadian Prime Minister Jean Cretien and former U.S. President Bill Clinton.

Situated directly on the border between the United States and Canada at the northern end of Interstate 15, the shared facility is the one of the busiest crossing points for trucks in the western states. The station processes 413,000 commercial shipments and 1.3 million travelers a year.

Offices for U.S. Customs, Border Patrol, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service are located on the south side of the main building, and similar offices for the Canadians are on the north side. Some facilities, such as the lunch room, locker room, and restrooms, are shared.

Locating a facility on an international border created some unusual problems for designers and contractors. Contractors had to deal with labor laws that prohibited construction crews from working on both sides of the border and with import/export laws that created difficulties when transporting supplies across the international boundary.

Designers had to take into account differences in gun laws between the two countries. For example, U.S. border patrol agents carry guns while their Canadian counterparts do not. This forced designers to place most shared areas on the U.S. side of the main port building. One staircase had to be moved from a central location to the south side because armed U.S. agents would have stepped into Canada momentarily whenever they used the stairs.

Funding for the \$26.5 million complex was split among four agencies with the U.S. General Services Administration providing 48.2 percent, Canada Border Services Agency 43.6 percent, MDT 4.1 percent, and Alberta Transportation and Utilities 4.1 percent.

The six-building complex includes over 100,000 square feet of building area and covers 22.8 acres that include four new lanes of Interstate 15.

Much of the information for this story came from "Beyond Borderline," an article by Dave Barista published in <u>Building Design and Construction Magazine</u>. To view the article on the Internet, go to www.bdcmag.com/magazine/articles/bdc0411border.asp.

### **Before & After**

### U.S. Highway 89 — Ringling-North

**Before** 



This photo of U.S. 89 taken in July 2000 shows deteriorating pavement. Engineers and contractors also had to correct subgrade and drainage problems.

Because of numerous problems with the old roadway, this 7.8-mile section of U.S. 89 was totally reconstructed. The new road has increased sight distance, flatter slopes, wider ditches, and significantly fewer problems with drifting snow. The pavement is 6 feet wider, and all the grades are now less than 4 percent (some of the original grades approached 6 percent).

After



This is almost the same view in August 2004. The roadway was shifted approximately 30 feet to the northeast to minimize impacts to wetlands and to reduce conflicts with utilities.

Due to the change in alignment, this project also restored approximately 4,700 feet of the original channel of the South Fork of the Smith River which had been redirected when John Ringling built the now-abandoned White Sulphur Springs and Yellowstone Park Railroad around the turn of the last century.

Primary Contractor: SK Construction, Inc.

### **Transit Tales**

### **A New Transit Center for Missoula**

The Missoula Ravalli Transportation Management Association (MR TMA) held a grand opening September 17 for the recently constructed Marlice McMahon Transportation Center. The new transportation center is a key component of the first transit-oriented development in Montana. This \$1.3 million dollar facility is the transfer point for Mountain Line Transit and University of Montana shuttle buses, providing a central transfer location for all south-side residents. Buses leave the center every 10 minutes to provide convenient access to all routes serving the community. The bus facility includes a coffee shop, heated waiting area, and a Transportation Demand Management Resource Center. The transfer station was designed by DK Architects and built by general contractor Bodell Construction.

Community partnerships contributed to the development of the new center and included the University of Montana, MDT, city of Missoula, Missoula Parking Commission, and Mountain Line Transit. Funding was provided by the University of Montana and a congressional earmark.

For more information, please contact Tom Steyaert at 444-4210 or MR TMA Executive Director Lyn Hellegaard at 327-8707.



Missoula's new Marlice McMahon Transportation Center includes bicyclist/pedestrian facilities, a bus garage, and a 280-space park-and-ride lot.

# A Tabloid History of Montana

### > Part 3 ≪

This is our last installment of Bob Fletcher's "Pioneer History of the Land of Shining Mountains," a unique account of Montana's past that appeared on the back of a pictorial map published by the Montana Highway Commission in 1937. In addition to his work as an engineer for the Montana Highway Department, Bob was responsible for the state's first historical markers, highway maps, and visitors' centers.

hen the poor man's placer digging began to peter out, quartz mining came into favor, and rich leads were found. That type of mining gave some assurance of stability to the camps. The valleys began to settle with stock growers and ranchers who saw a chance to profit by supplying fresh meat and farm products to the mining element. So western Montana became permanently settled while everything east of the mountains was still held by the Indians. Tolerably wild and ferocious Indians, too, not given to supinely bowing to the whim of their white brothers.

John Bozeman and Old Jim Bridger had guided wagon trains across this hostile country from Ft. Laramie, Wyoming, to Virginia City, Montana, in '63. The so-called Bozeman Trail, Bo-



nanza Trail or Bridger Cutoff made an important saving in time and distance for eager emigrants but it harrowed up the feelings of the tribes. The short cut invaded their hunting grounds and violated a treaty that they had been led to believe meant what it said. They devoted a lot of attention to the caravans and to the forts which the army built for protection of the

enterprising argonauts. In fact the Sioux under Chief Red Cloud showered down so many pointed objections from their trusty bows that the Government closed the trail and withdrew the garrisons.

But the Indians were not destined to remain undisturbed for long. Southern cattle had been pushed up the Texas Trail since 1867. The trail dead ended at the Platte, southern boundary of the Indian country. Stockmen cast a longing eye on the buffalo range sweeping away to the north. The cattle men of western Montana were getting cramped for room, too, and honed to spill their herds down the east slope of the mountains to the plains country. The Northern Pacific Railway wanted to push their railhead west from Bismarck and participate in the prosperity which the cattle business had brought to the Kansas Pacific and Union Pacific farther south.

The Indian hunting grounds were under pressure from three sides, with various branches of the federal government in a peculiar situation. Bound by treaty, they were obligated to protect the Indians from white invasions and likewise protect the whites from forays by the Indians. Finally prospectors slipped into the forbidden precincts of the Black Hills and found gold. That settled it. The more articulate race won the argument and the government undertook the job of confining the Indians to reservations.

Quite a few notable generals had a brisk time doing it, while the Indians got in a few never to be forgotten licks such as the



Battle of the Little Big Horn, where Custer went west. Soon after that memorable fracas in '76 the buffalo hunters began clearing the range of bison and the cattle boom of the '80s began. Longhorn cow critters surged up the trail from Texas, western cattle came eastward over the mountain barriers, and "barnyard stock" came from the east by rail to fill the old buffalo range.

It was a chance to roll up fortunes. Free grass, small expense and big returns. The country went wild over the beef bonanza with the fever spreading as far as England and canny Scotland. Over expansion, depreciating markets and a few hard winters put a crimp in many a cattle spread. The fittest and most intelligently managed outfits survived.

Starting in 1910 there came another change. One of those sporadic back-to-the-land hurrahs swept the northwest and there was a rush for free land in Montana. Train loads of newcomers rolled in and filed homestead entries on surveyed government land. Others squatted on unsurveyed ground and immediately set up a wail for section corners to be established. They fenced the range and plowed under the native grasses. With the optimism born of inexperience they looked forward to bumper crops on semi-arid bench land. Montana valleys susceptible to irrigation had been settled long before and no richer land is to be found anywhere, but the benches were never meant for a Garden of Eden. So it just wasn't in the cards for the dry-landers to win. The State and Federal agencies now have a problem on their hands to bring back much of that sort of ground to its original state before all of the top soil is blown back east.

Montana's mines are still rich in gold, silver, copper, lead and zinc. Her Indians are living on seven reservations. Big cattle and sheep outfits still operate, though off the beaten trail. The mountains, lakes and streams have not changed much since white men first saw them and primitive areas have been preserved where no roads are allowed. Montana people are hospitable and we offer our recreational areas to our guests as the nation's playground.

This meager outline which will serve to establish the chronology of the pictorial subjects on the map can be filled in with a wealth of detail. Romance, adventure and sagas more thrilling than fiction have been recorded in many books.

Best of luck to you, and happy days in Montana, the Land of the Shining Mountains.

... BOB FLETCHER



#### **MDT** Wants Your Comments

To view the list of highway projects MDT plans to present to the Transportation Commission, go to www.mdt.state.mt.us and click on the Rail, Transit & Planning link under Departments. From there, click on 2005 Proposed Highway Projects. If you prefer to receive the list by mail, call us at 1-800-714-7298.

Mail your comments on proposed projects to MDT at the following address or e-mail them to mdt2005pe@state.mt.us.

MDT Project Analysis Chief PO Box 201001 Helena, MT 59620-1001

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### **Contact Information**

area or person not listed, call 800-714-7296 (in Montana only) or 406-444-3423. The TTY number is 406-444-7696 or 800-335-7592. sstraehl@mt.gov Bike/Pedestrian ...... 444-9273 dturner@mt.gov Map Orders (Karen Horne-Smith)......444-6119 khorne@mt.gov ......dturner@mt.gov glarson@mt.gov Secondary Roads (Wayne Noem).......444-6109 wnoem@mt.gov .....zkazimi@mt.gov dbisom@mt.gov .....tsteyaert@mt.gov

Only the most frequently requested numbers are listed here. For an

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MDT's mission is to serve the public by providing a transportation system and services that emphasize quality, safety, cost effectiveness, economic vitality and sensitivity to the environment.

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